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THE
D E S T R U C T I O N
O F
N I N I V E H:
A
P O E M.

BY
CHARLES JENNER, M.A.

K

C A M B R I D G E,

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M.DCC.LXVIII.

THE
DESTROYED
OF
MINI
H.

P. O. E. M.



A Clause of Mr. SEATON's Will,
Dated Oct. 8. 1738.

I Give my Kissingbury Estate to the University of Cambridge for ever : the Rents of which shall be disposed of yearly by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, as he the Vice-Chancellor, the Master of Clare-Hall, and the Greek Professor for the time being, or any two of them shall agree. Which three persons aforesaid shall give out a Subject, which Subject shall for the first year be one or other of the Perfections or Attributes of the Supreme Being, and so the succeeding Years, till the Subject is exhausted ; and afterwards the Subject shall be either Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, &c. or whatever else may be judged by the Vice-Chancellor, Master of Clare-Hall, and Greek Professor, to be most conducive to the honour of the Supreme Being and recommendation of Virtue. And they shall yearly dispose of the Rent of the above Estate to that Master of Arts, whose Poem on the Subject given shall be best approved by them. Which Poem I ordain to be always in English, and to be printed ; the expence of which shall be deducted out of the product of the Estate, and the residue given as a reward for the Composer of the Poem, or Ode, or Copy of Verses.

WE the underwritten do assign Mr. SEATON's Reward to CHARLES JENNER, A.M. for his Poem on *The Destruction of Niniveh*, and do direct the said Poem to be printed according to the Tenor of the Will.

Oct. 28.
1768.

James Marriott, Vice-Chancellor.
M. Lort, Greek Professor.

Dated Oct. 8, 1938.

[illegible]

M. L. Carr, Greek Professor.

THE
D E S T R U C T I O N
O F
N I N I V E H.

G O D's mercy long abus'd, and heav'nly wrath
Succeeding flow with firm and dreadful step
And arm uplifted high, be now my Theme.
Horror! be thou my Muse. — And list ye proud,
Ye rich, ye vain, for 'tis to you I sing,
List from your downy beds of Tyrian dye
Where sunk in careless ease and worthless sloth,
In dreams of pleasures past or joys to come
Batt'ning ye lie; List from your marble Halls
Whence, drowning ev'ry wise and serious thought,
The wanton voice of Luxury resounds,
Whilst Mirth, uncheck'd by fair Discretion's law

B

Pours

2 . DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH:

Pours from the golden goblet's ample round
The luscious poison of misused wine,
And hid beneath the garb of Happiness
Steals to your easy hearts with pleasing guile
With sweet, but certain death. O turn awhile
The eye too long on Pleasure's smiles intent,
On your own breasts turn once it's wand'ring sight:
See ye God's image there? O rather say,
See ye not there, what erst the Poets feign'd
The dire effect of Circe's mad'ning draught,
God's holy image all defac'd, and chang'd
To the loath'd form of filthy goats or swine,
The vital spark from Heav'n extinct, and sunk
By base contagion to the abject state
Of that blind instinct which informs the brute;
Whilst ye, so perfect in your misery,
Feel not the mortifying change, but boast
Your manly sense and reason unimpair'd.

True, ye are rich and great: The orient sun
Which gilds your stately turrets with his rays
Sees not a clime but whence your riches speed;

No

No wind that blows but o'er the oozy flood
Wafts your rich barks from some far distant shore:
True, ye have rule o'er all the sea-girt Isles
Which people the vast bosom of the deep,
Whilst at your nod their tributary Lords
Wield but your sceptres and dispense your laws:
In strength well tried that mocks the pow'r of war
Aloft in threat'ning pride your city stands,
Scoffing the boasted works of Memphian Kings
When Egypt with the proud Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury; Far off 'tis known
By many a tow'ring structure high, which lifts
It's proud head to the sky, glitt'ring with gold;
Within Ease, Pomp, and Luxury contend
Throughout each spacious street for mastery,
Whilst midnight revels and gay noontide feasts
Speak joy and mirth and full security.
Are ye so safe? Such once was Niniveh! —
As yours her pow'r and wealth, as yours her crimes:
Where lies she now? Go send your wisemen forth
And let them search where rapid Tigris rolls
If there her place be found; or let them try

4 DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH:

If chance the banks by fair Euphrates wash'd ^a
Boast not the poor remains of so much pride;
They faulted long nor fix the truth at length.
She who in thralldom led God's chosen flock
And wav'd her banners o'er the subject East,
She who for ages fix'd her stately height
In such proud sort as brav'd the frowns of Fate,
Shone but a meteor for a moment's gaze
To fall at once nor leave one spark behind,
Not one faint glimpse to say 'twas here, 'twas there.

Hear then her doom, and tremble for your own.

Now had th' Almighty Judge of Heav'n and Earth,
Within whose hand the proud Assyria serv'd
But as a scourge to punish Israel's sin,
With indignation view'd the Victor's pride,
Who flush'd with conquest and debauch'd by wealth
Spurn'd at high Heav'n, and midst their gorgeous feasts
Gave honour to themselves, nor thought on God,
Save to blaspheme his name, who impious trod

Beneath

^a Though most authors are of opinion that Niniveh was situated on the river Tigris, yet no less persons than Ctesias and Diodorus Siculus represent it as situated on the Euphrates. Vide note ^b.

Beneath irrev'rent feet his high behests
 Indulging ev'ry sense; th' impetuous youth
 Following with eager steps and dauntless front
 Wherever passion or lewd rapine call'd,
 Whilst aged Sires, on tott'ring crutches prop'd,
 Look'd smiling on, and with a guilty sigh
 Envied their sons the joys they could not share.

He saw, and turn'd him loth to his revenge;
 Nor struck at once, but with a parent's care
 Whose arms are ever open to receive
 The humbled prodigal who turns, though late,
 To seek his face, sent forth his holy word
 Of his most just though most severe intent
 Warning to give. The word to Jonah came;
 Who all unus'd to bear such high commands
 Save to God's own elect,^b with doubtful mind
 Paus'd wond'ring. Ill, full ill such pause became
 Him who ere then had heard that mighty voice,
 Who knew that sound to those who disobey

Terrific

^b Jonas ne fut pas seulement appelé comme les autres Prophetes, a reprendre les dix tribus de leur Idolatries, Dieu lui donna aussi la commission d'aller denoncer aux Ninivites la ruine de leur Ville et leur perte totale. L'Histoire de la Bible par Martin. pag. 254,

6 DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH:

Terrific as the thunder's crash, but mild
As the soft wind which fann'd Eve's roseate bow'r
Ere Sin had footing there, to those who hear
And fly with duteous heart to execute.
Why did he pause? Ah why! unless to shew
To after times that he whose fault'ring mind
But one short moment wavers in suspense
When Duty calls, gives the arch-tempter time
To gain firm footing in his Soul, and urge
Some well-devised plea to stop his course.
Why did he hesitate, why inly shew
Reluctance against God, or by a thought
Distrust his firmness, or suspect his truth!
Swift to betray and ever on the watch
The subtle Tempter that short moment seiz'd
To raise a mist before the Prophet's sight
Which shew'd it possible to flee from God.

O where was that all-sacred spirit flown
Which erst had glow'd within his fervent breast,
That fire prophetic, fitted and impell'd
To noblest purposes by God's own hand,

Which

Which unappall'd by guilt, uncheck'd by fear,
Should scatter terror through an impious world
And tell the dreadful tale of wrath to come!
'Twas gone, and in it's place wild frantic fear
And base distrust and impious doubt sprang up
Sinking the Prophet in the Man. He flies,
O miserable change! the victim now
No longer the dread harbinger alone
Of heav'nly wrath: he flies, nor turns to think
'Till scenes of horror strike his conscious heart
And quick destruction thunders to his soul.
Wide o'er the raging billows of the deep
Wild Horror stalks with aspect terrible,
Whilst plunging deep full many a fathom down
He learns by sad experience to declare
How heavy 'tis to feel the wrath of Heav'n
And bear the vengeance of an angry God.
Nor yet untried he tells the happier tale
Of mercy, when with pitying hand outstretch'd
To rescue from the very grasp of Death,
That Pow'r supreme by whom the storm is rais'd
Provides unhop'd-for safety in the deep.

8 DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH:

In vain the light'nings shoot their ghastly gleam,
Wild thunders roar, and Ocean groaning deep
Lifts it's o'erwhelming billows to the sky,
Unhurt he issues from his living tomb,
His glad eye op'ning on the light of heav'n,
And wrapt in wonder, joy and gratitude
With eager step pursues his destin'd way,
Type of that plan supreme not yet fulfill'd
Which reconcil'd the vengeance due to guilt
With "that dear might" which loos'd the bands of Death.

'Twas morn, and o'er the glitt'ring tow'rs the Sun
Shed wide his kindling beams; illum'd with gold
Aloft the spiry turrets shone, and wav'd
Their silken banners streaming in the wind
With gay display; bedeck'd with martial spoils,
From hapless Israel won, rich trophies rose,
And frequent grac'd the walls. With conscious pride
His wide domain the victor Monarch view'd,
Whilst, sitting high amidst a gaudy herd
Of Sycophants, he gave a loose to joy,

Rais'd

* There shall no sign be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonas. S.Matt. 16.4.

Rais'd a whole nation's voice in festive songs,
And taught his ready slaves too prone to learn,
That luxury alone is happiness.

Slow and unnotic'd through the spacious streets
The holy prophet walk'd and mark'd their pride.
He mark'd their pow'r, he mark'd their wealth, and now
A heaving sigh he stole, whilst all around
The growing multitudes he view'd, who throng'd
Thick as the insect race which quiv'ring float
With hum incessant on the evening breeze.
Sorrowing he mark'd the jocund air which shone
In ev'ry face and brighten'd ev'ry eye,
Whilst all was joy and mirth and careless ease;
Sad contrast to the prospect in his soul!
He sigh'd, and one mild look of pity cast,
"Just Heav'n— but forty days! — thy will be done!"
Then op'ning slow the book of Fate, he turn'd
And "O" he cried "Vain, heedless race attend,
Ye who with giant pride a course full long
Of old, unfeeling vice have run, and ye
Whom Luxury with soft seducing smile

10 DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH:

Allures, and binds in filken chains, attend;
Leave, leave, for ever leave your gay delights,
Your wonted triumphs and your ceaseless mirth,
For O sad change! a long long train of woes,
Like a swart storm which gathers in the wind,
Hangs hov'ring o'er your destin'd heads, and waits
But the scant hour appointed ere it bursts
And crumbles you to dust. Unhappy state!
Quick quick the moment comes when all thy strength
Which triumph'd far and wide with greedy pow'r
Shall sink to less than woman's weakness, fall'n
Beneath the hopeless abject state of those
Who felt the keen edge of thy Tyranny.
I see thy strong tow'rs nod, thy bulwarks rock,
Thy stately fabricks from their centre heave,
Whilst Desolation like a whirlwind flies
In one sad ruin overwhelming all.
Go seek your King amidst his pageant state,
Nor tremble at his look, but bid him fear;
And boldly tell him one unwelcome truth,
That now, evn now the hand of Heav'n is rear'd,
Or ere the fortieth Sun shall rise and set,

To

To blast the blooming laurels on his brow,
And hurl him from his car of triumph down,
No more to rise, but with his meanest slaves
To lie confounded in one gen'ral doom."

All pow'rful is the voice of Truth : Aghast
The trembling people stand, nor doubt his words,
Whilst coward Conscience whispers to their soul
How less than nothing is the aid which wealth
Or pow'r can lend against the wrath of Heav'n,
By sense of danger rous'd they bow the knee
And prostrate turn to God, remember'd scarce
Nor ever fought in moments happier deem'd :
Themselves sufficient to themselves, they scorn'd
To court his smile, but dar'd not brave his frown.
Fear taught them first to kneel and first to pray,
Whilst memory officious to their view
Held the black register of their misdeeds.
Despair first taught their harden'd hearts to melt
And turn'd the flint-stone to a springing-well,
Whence flow'd in copious streams those contrite tears
Which fail not in the eye of Heav'n to purge

12 DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH:

The soul from guilt, and wash out ev'ry stain.

Nor vain their pray'rs, their tears; for Heav'n who
Knows well the frailty of the sons of earth, [form'd
Nor seeks perfection there, but kindly deigns
To raise the humbled sinner from the dust
And give to penitence the promis'd meed
Of virtue undefil'd. A nation's tears
Absolv'd a nation's guilt; and gracious Heav'n
With mild relenting eye and arm restrain'd
Receiv'd their proffer'd vows.— But ah! how vain,
How weak is Man! how frail his best resolves!
But frailest those which owe their hasty birth
To fear; how short, how transient is their life.
Hardly obtain'd, they shine but like the sparks
Struck from the flint, which scarce outlive the blow.
Ev'n thus, or ere the fortieth Sun had sat,
The dreaded sentence seem'd an idle dream
And the full tide of Sin, awhile restrain'd,
Rush'd madly forward with redoubled force
Precluding ev'ry hope of future grace.
That Heav'n should find it easier to forgive

Than

Than wayward man alas to be forgiv'n!
 But O unhappy state! O desp'rate race!
 A sterner prophet, ISRAEL'S COMFORTER,^d
 Hath dipp'd his pen in blood to write thy doom.
 Too deep the reeking sword shall strike, too near
 To trifle with it's edge; again 'tis drawn
 And never never shall be sheath'd, 'till wide
 It spreads destruction o'er thy plains, nor leaves
 A hand to bury or an eye to weep.

Hark where the conqu'ring Mede with furious voice
 Calls loud for help; Stern Babylon replies;^e
 Together roll their rattling chariots on,
 Their blended Armies gather as they run,
 And brandishing their eager faulchions high
 Impetuous rush like Lions on their prey.
 They come, they come, lo where thy weak hosts fly,
 Nor fly in safety; see they sink, they fall,
 Fall like ripe fruit, or yellow autumn leaves,

And

^d Naum qui interpretatur Consolator. Jam enim decem tribus ab Assyriis deductæ fuerant in captivitatem sub Ezechia Rege Juda, sub quo etiam nunc in consolationem populi transmigrati, adversum Niniven visio cernitur. Hieron. in Naum.

^e This point, I think, is generally agreed upon, That Niniveh was taken and destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians; these two rebelling and uniting together subverted the Assyrian empire. Bp. Newton on the Prophecies. Vol.3. pag.261.

14 DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH:

And strew the victor's path. Lost in amaze
 Thy hardy vet'rans stand to see such feats
 As turn their bloodiest wars to childish frays;
 And ever and anon with anguish pierc'd
 "Stand, stand," they faintly cry, but none regards,^f
 "Turn dastard slaves," but no one will look back.
 Frantic with fear they lose the pow'r to raise
 One warding shield to break the Victor's stroke:
 Th' ensanguin'd field alone with carnage strew'd
 Awhile impedes their eager way: But now,
 Through scenes of Horror bursting, at thy walls
 A thousand banners wave, and purple spears
 Unnumber'd press; vainly thy ports are barr'd,
 Thy strong tow'rs man'd with many a hardy chief,
 Vain thy strong holds, vain all thy ancient might,
 For lo the rapid flood impetuous swells^g
 And Desolation borne upon it's waves
 In dreadful pomp, invades thy tott'ring wall,
 And rides in horrid triumph through the breach.
 Remembrance now calls forth the flatt'ring tale
 Prophetic, which thy sage Forefathers told^h

Your

^f Nahum ii. 8.

^g Nahum i. 8.

^h This alludes to the following passage in Diodorus Siculus. *Ην δ' αὖτε λογιον,*
 &c. Atqui vaticinium a majoribus traditum habebat, a nullo capi Ninum
 posse nisi fluvius urbi prius hostis evaderet. Tertio demum anno accidit, ut *Eu-*
phrates

Your wise men sighing shake their hoary heads,
 Foreboding now th' unlook'd-for time is come
 When the proud stream shall lift her rebel waves
 Against those sacred walls which grace her shore.

And now thy bulwarks nod, they bow, they fall,
 Low, low on earth thy prostrate glory lies.
 Now rooted from their base the sculptur'd dome,
 The stately column and the storied arch,
 In awful ruin lie: Whilst ruthless War,
 The keen Scythe snatching from the hand of Time
 With speedier rage to deal destruction round,
 Levels the work of ages at a blow;
 Nor one proud track of ancient glory leaves,
 Save what the rolls of mem'ry may supply
 Uncertain, or the eye inquisitive
 Trace from the mould'ring heaps of scatter'd pride,
 As through thy grass-grown streets with fearful tread
 The trav'ler strays, casting a wary look
 Lest basking in the sculptur'd cornice lurk
 The slimy adder or the mottled snake,

And

phrates continuis imbrium gravissimorum tempestatibus excrescens, urbis partem inundaret et murum ad stadia viginti dejiceret. Tum vero finem habere oraculum, amnemque manifeste urbi hostem esse Rex judicans, spem salutis abjecit. Diodorus Siculus. Lib. 2.

16 DESTRUCTION OF NINIVEH, &c.

And starting hears the horrid night-bird's scream
From off the gilded chapter resound
With lonely eccho through the moss-grown walls.

Thus blasted in it's very noon of pride
Falls the weak State whose tott'ring base is laid
Unstable in the sand of human pow'r.
And mark her fall ye gen'rous band who claim
The honour'd name of Patriot, mark it well,
And let it grave this lesson on your heart,
"They raise a Nation's strength alone, who raise
"A Nation's virtue;" think how weak, how vain
Proves ev'ry State which boasts not her support,
Like the mysterious Gourd, beneath whose shade
The Prophet sat, it blossoms for a day;
But deep within it's canker'd root conceal'd
The worm of Sin with ever rankling tooth
Preys on it's vital part: unmark'd, unseen
The inbred venom works, 'till drooping fast,
It's blushing honours sinking to the dust,
It fades forgot, nor leaves to after times
The precious odour of a good report.